

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) An isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a fusion polypeptide that forms a multimer capable of binding interleukin-18 (IL-18) to form a nonfunctional complex, comprising:

a) a nucleotide sequence encoding a first fusion polypeptide component comprising the amino acid sequence of an IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a specificity determining component of an IL-18 receptor;

b) a nucleotide sequence encoding a second fusion polypeptide component comprising the amino acid sequence of an IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a signal transducing component of an IL-18 receptor; and

c) a nucleotide sequence encoding a third fusion polypeptide component comprising the amino acid sequence of a multimerizing component, wherein the multimer is formed due to the interactions between multimerizing components.

2. (previously presented) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, wherein the nucleotide sequence encoding the first component is upstream of the nucleotide sequence encoding the second component.

3. (previously presented) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, wherein the nucleotide sequence encoding the first component is downstream of the nucleotide sequence encoding the second component.

4 – 9. (Canceled)

10. (previously presented) The isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, wherein the multimerizing component comprises an immunoglobulin derived domain.

11. (currently amended) The isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 10, wherein the immunoglobulin derived domain is selected from the group consisting of the Fc domain of IgG, and the heavy chain of IgG, ~~and the light chain of IgG.~~

12. (previously presented) A fusion polypeptide encoded by the isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 1.

13. (previously presented) A composition capable of binding IL-18 to form a nonfunctional complex comprising a multimer of the fusion polypeptide of claim 12.

14. (Original) The composition of claim 13, wherein the multimer is a dimer.

15. (previously presented) A vector which comprises the nucleic acid molecule of claim 1.

16. (previously presented) An expression vector comprising a nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, wherein the nucleic acid molecule is operatively linked to an expression control sequence.

17. (Original) A host-vector system for the production of a fusion polypeptide which comprises the expression vector of claim 16, in a suitable host cell.

18. (Original) The host-vector system of claim 17, wherein the suitable host cell is a bacterial cell, yeast cell, insect cell, or mammalian cell.

19. (previously presented) The host-vector system of claim 17, wherein the suitable host cell is selected from the group consisting of *E. coli*, COS, CHO, 293, BHK, and NSO.

20-24. Canceled.

25. (Original) A method of producing a fusion polypeptide which comprises growing cells of the host-vector system of claim 17, under conditions permitting production of the fusion polypeptide and recovering the fusion polypeptide so produced.

26. (previously presented) An isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a fusion polypeptide that forms a dimer capable of binding interleukin-18 (IL-18) to form a nonfunctional complex, wherein the dimer comprises a first and second fusion polypeptide, each fusion polypeptide comprising:

a) ~~a nucleotide sequence encoding~~ a first fusion polypeptide component comprising the amino acid sequence of an IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a specificity determining component of an IL-18 receptor;

b) ~~a nucleotide sequence encoding~~ a second fusion polypeptide component comprising the amino acid sequence of an IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a signal transducing component of an IL-18 receptor; and

c) ~~a nucleotide sequence encoding a third fusion polypeptide~~ component comprising the amino acid sequence of a multimerizing component, wherein the dimer is formed due to the interactions between multimerizing components.

27-28. Canceled.

29. (previously presented) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, wherein the IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a specificity determining component is that portion necessary to form a complex with IL-18.

30. (previously presented) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, wherein the IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a signal transducing component is that portion necessary to form a complex with IL-18.

31. (previously presented) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 26, wherein the IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a specificity determining component is that portion necessary to form a complex with IL-18.

32. (previously presented) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 26, wherein the IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a signal transducing component is that portion necessary to form a complex with IL-18.

33. (currently amended) A dimeric interleukin-18 (IL-18) antagonist capable of binding IL-18 to form a nonfunctional complex, comprising a first and second fusion polypeptides, each polypeptide comprising:

a) a first ~~fusion polypeptide~~ component comprising the amino acid sequence of an IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a specificity determining component of an IL-18 receptor;

b) a second ~~fusion polypeptide~~ component comprising the amino acid sequence of an IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a signal transducing component of an IL-18 receptor; and

c) a third ~~fusion polypeptide~~ component comprising the amino acid sequence of a multimerizing component, wherein the dimer is formed due to the interactions between multimerizing components.

34. (previously presented) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 33, wherein the IL-18 binding portion

of an extracellular domain of a specificity determining component is that portion necessary to form a complex with IL-18.

35. (previously presented) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 33, wherein the IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a signal transducing component is that portion necessary to form a complex with IL-18.